Press release

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Autumn leaves set to fall

27 November 2001

THE countryside's array of autumnal colours could be blown away this week as high winds hit the UK, the Met Office is warning.

The Met Office is forecasting high winds across the country, with gales in places, particularly the North, from Thursday. On Friday there will be severe gales in some areas.

The unseasonably warm weather this October has meant trees have kept their golden, red and brown leaves for longer. Normally the trees would have dropped their leaves weeks ago, with the traditional autumn peak in mid-October.

This year's late autumn has also made colours brighter because the warmer weather encourages leaves to store more sugars and starch than normal.
But warnings of high winds and possible gales mean the trees could be shedding their leaves in their masses.

Head of Forecasting, Ewen McCallum, said: "The autumnal colours arrived late this year. A lot of trees, especially oaks, were still green into October. We have had the warmest October on record, two or three degrees above the norm, and over the last two weeks we have had quiet weather and still nights. But from Thursday that is going to change and we are going to see more traditional autumn weather, with more in the way of wind and rain."

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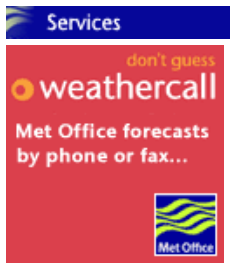

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